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The relationship between traumatic occupational stressors, appraisal, coping, hardiness and psychological outcomes – the cognitive-behavioural model applied to rescue helicopter crews.

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Abstract

The present study used the cognitive-behavioural model of stress to investigate how traumatic events encountered during the performance of occupational roles affected an individual's health and well being. This study was conducted with rescue helicopter crews, a relatively unstudied group of emergency service personnel, but a particularly vital group in New Zealand where rough terrain and changeable weather mean land based crews can not always easily or quickly access certain incidents. This study also aimed to investigate the role cognitive hardiness may play in moderating the impacts of traumatic encounters.

Questionnaires assessed participant's primary appraisals and coping strategies, cognitive hardiness, general health and well-being, positive and negative affect and growth after a particular traumatic or stressful event encountered whilst carrying out their occupational duties.

Bivariate correlations suggest this population used unique strategies to cope with the events they encountered, particularly using techniques which aim to disengage ones self from the situation. These strategies tended to be adaptive for this population. Multiple regression analysis suggested that cognitive hardiness played a moderating role for some individuals but not for others. Future research is needed to test a variety of relationships tentatively established in the present study.

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